

Idaho State University
Idaho Museum of Natural History (IMNH)

S T R A T E G I C P L A N

Executive Summary

May 2007

MUSEUM OVERVIEW

The Idaho Museum of Natural History was founded in 1934 in Pocatello as the Historical Museum at the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho, as Idaho State University was then called. The Museum was established by a group of professors in an effort to collect, preserve, and display the region's natural and cultural heritage.

The earliest collections, consisting of about 5,000 objects, were primarily anthropological, archaeological, and historical artifacts largely donated by the Pocatello Chamber of Commerce and faculty and supporters of the Southern Branch. The biological collections were developed by faculty in the Biological Sciences Department at approximately the same time. The Museum was governed by a 17-member Historical Museum Committee until the mid-1950's when it was renamed the Idaho State College Museum and its first full-time director was appointed. In 1963, Idaho State College became Idaho State University, and the Museum changed its name to the Idaho State University Museum.

For many years, the Museum's holdings were strewn about the ISU campus in a variety of buildings. In 1976, Museum offices, exhibits and collections finally found a permanent home in the old library building, now known as the Museum Building. In 1977, the museum reoriented its mission to focus on natural history and the Ray J. Davis Herbarium and zoological collections were formally transferred from the ISU Department of Biological Sciences. The Museum's historical collections were handed over to the Idaho State Historical Society, the Bannock County Historical Society, and the Idaho State University Library.

Also at this time, Museum and university officials worked at the state level to gain recognition for the Museum. In May 1977, the Idaho State Board of Education adopted a resolution requesting that Governor John Evans designate the Idaho State University Museum as the Idaho Museum of Natural History (IMNH); he signed this proclamation on July 1, 1977. In 1986, the Idaho State Legislature confirmed the governor's proclamation by enacting legislation that formally designated the Museum as the official state museum of natural history (Idaho Statute 33-3012).

IMNH now exists as a Special Program of Public Service (with separate line-item funding) of the Idaho State Board of Education, under the administration of Idaho State University. Currently the Museum holds and cares for over 500,000 natural and cultural objects in its collections areas located in the Museum building's basement and fourth floor. The basement also houses the exhibition fabrication shop and artifact and fossil preparation laboratories. The main floor contains administrative offices, the Education Resource Center, education classroom, and Children's Discovery Room, the Stirton-Kelson Library, exhibition galleries, exhibition graphics studio, and Museum Store. Research areas, including the Idaho Virtualization Laboratory, space for student and visiting researchers, and curator offices are found in the basement and on the fourth floor.

In 2009, the Idaho Museum of Natural History will celebrate its 75th birthday.

VISION

Core functions mandated by Idaho Statute 33-3012 for the Idaho Museum of Natural History are:

- To collect, care for, research, interpret and present, through educational programs and exhibitions, Idaho's cultural and natural heritage.
- To support and encourage local and municipal natural history museums throughout the state of Idaho.

In meeting these functions, the core values for the IMNH are:

Stewardship: We care for collections with dedication and accountability.

Community: We engage a diverse community by understanding their interests and empowering their personal relationship with natural and cultural heritage.

Excellence: We educate and inspire with professional integrity, scholarship, research and innovation.

Respect: We listen, consider, and respond fairly to all voices.

Vitality: We flourish by cultivating multiple, diverse avenues of support.

IMNH is well recognized by its constituents and colleagues for outstanding research, collections, and interpretation of Idaho's natural and cultural treasures. We consistently draw diverse and increasing patronage from scholars, educational institutions, and the public-at-large.

We pursue programs in collections enhancement and research to support our mission.

Our interpretive programs are based on audience input, academic research and professional standards, and are scholarly, meaningful, accessible and engaging.

Idaho natural history museums benefit from IMNH resources and services.

Research, collections, and interpretation have an ample and appropriate facility in accordance with all accepted standards of curation, care and delivery.

Diverse funding sources amply support all aspects of operation and staff positions for IMNH mission areas and the retention of outstanding employees.

Partners – educators, businesses, state and federal agencies, and other community service organizations and individuals – are actively engaged in fulfilling the IMNH mission through contributions of funding, time, expertise and advocacy.

Appropriate technologies support all IMNH mission areas efficiently and effectively.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Idaho Museum of Natural History actively nurtures an understanding of and delight in Idaho's natural and cultural heritage. As the official state museum of natural history, it acquires, preserves, studies, interprets and displays natural and cultural objects for Idaho residents, visitors and the world's community of students and scholars. The Museum also supports and encourages Idaho's other natural history museums through mentoring and training in sound museological practices.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Seven Strategic Directives focus the current IMNH Strategic Plan. These are areas of focus and goals that lead to the delivery of core services and achievement of the vision. The goals identified within these areas of focus encompass all Museum activities for the next three years. In a few cases it was recognized that a goal was larger than three years could accommodate, and five years was set as the time frame. Details for each Goal, with supporting actions and the necessary personnel, resources, and measure of success within a given time frame, are detailed in the IMNH full strategic plan.

Strategic Directives, Goals, and Actions Outline

Strategic Directive I: Fulfill and enhance core services

Goal 1: Deliver core services

- Action 1: Collect Idaho's natural and cultural treasures
- Action 2: Care for Idaho's natural and cultural treasures
- Action 3: Research Idaho's natural and cultural treasures
- Action 4: Interpret Idaho's natural and cultural treasures
- Action 5: Support and encourage Idaho's natural history museums

Goal 2: Strengthen collections and enhance their status

- Action 1: Evaluate local, national, and international significance of all collections
- Action 2: Evaluate collections for weaknesses, explore how to correct
- Action 3: Explore our user audiences, and examine venues for promoting our collections to new users
- Action 4: Explore costs for undertakings identified in Actions 2-3
- Future Action 5: Implement plans as indicated by Actions 1-4*

Goal 3: Increase space for all Museum functions

- Action 1: Assess available space / needs
- Action 2: Prioritize needs
- Action 3: Develop plan to optimize available space
- Action 4: Implement plan to optimize available space
- Action 5: Conduct campaign to raise awareness of supplemental space needs
- Action 6: Explore ideal IMNH facility

Goal 4: Increase Museum research opportunities

- Action 1: Develop materials that describe IMNH strengths and research opportunities
- Action 2: Meet with appropriate entities (e.g. ISU departments, state agencies, etc.) to disseminate information and investigate partnerships
- Action 3: Hold retreat-like forum to discuss IMNH strengths and opportunities
- Action 4: Hold 2nd forum to present and vet the ideas

Action 5: Explore refined list

Goal 5: Strengthen Museum exhibitions and educational programs that represent our mission, research and/or collections for a wider audience

Action 1: Get to know ourselves our mission, research, and collections

Action 2: Get to know our audiences - conduct surveys, etc.

Action 3: Develop interpretive plan reflecting our mission, research, and collections and which rigorously incorporates audiences' needs and curriculum standards

Action 4: Develop long-term plans for exhibits and educational programs

Action 5: Implement interpretive plan for exhibits and educational programs

Goal 6: Attain economic self-sufficiency of the Museum Store

Action 1: Create business plan for Museum Store

Action 2: Update Store business plan

Action 3: Create a viable Museum E-store

Action 4: Increase sales for on-site Museum Store

Action 5: Make store manager position full-time and permanent

Goal 7: Expand Museum membership program

Part 1 - Increase IMNH Membership

Action 1: Conduct yearly membership drive

Action 2: Initiate Kid's Membership Program

Action 3: Encourage broader community support

Part 2 - Care and Feeding of Membership Program

Action 1: Increase member participation in Museum events

Action 2: Integrate and coordinate membership events with Museum divisions and activities-

Action 3: Develop and implement events schedule

Action 4: Follow through with membership benefit events and recognition at each level

Goal 8: Explore and pursue opportunities to publish museum-related topics

Action 1: Assess audiences for Museum-related publications

Action 2: Based on audience assessment, develop a business plan for Museum-related publications, if indicated

Future Action 3: Pursue opportunities to publish Museum-related topics, if indicated

Future Action 4: Business plan for publishing Museum-related topics implemented

Strategic Directive II: Increase revenue

Goal 1: Pursue funding from repositing agencies in support of collections

Action 1: Examine existing agreements and other repository structures

Action 2: Track IMNH resources currently expended for repository activities

Action 3: Review national repository storage and processing fees

Action 4: Solicit MOUs from repositing agencies

Action 5: Prepare and send letter to repositing agencies which includes report from Action 3 and a status report for their collections; solicit their comments

Action 6: Explore marketing our repository services to a regional audience

Action 7: Actively track and support appropriate legislation that funds repositing agencies' collection activities.

Action 8: Follow up as indicated by Actions 1-7

Goal 2: Foster an environment to enable exploring and pursuing more grant opportunities

- Action 1: Brainstorm with staff about potential projects suited to grants
- Action 2: Prioritize projects based on available staff and resources, with an eye to how projects will relate to the 2006 Strategic Plan
- Action 3: Identify available granting resources, especially funding sources for previous IMNH projects, and identify matching requirements
- Action 4: Based on priority ranking and available matching resources, begin writing grants
- Action 5: Follow up as indicated for FY 2007-2008

Goal 3: Increase sponsorships for public programs

- Action 1: Determine sponsorship opportunities for programs as they arise
- Action 2: Develop sponsorship approach for each program
- Action 3: Create list of appropriate potential sponsors based on approach
- Action 4: Create sponsorship pitch materials for each program (as needed)
- Action 5: Secure sponsorships

Strategic Directive III: Strengthen the Museum's visibility and professional standing

Goal 1: Strengthen Museum visibility and name recognition

- Action 1: Assess current Museum visibility and name recognition
- Action 2: Create annual general Museum marketing plan
- Action 3: Implement strategies from marketing plan
- Action 4: Develop strategies for differentiating IMNH from other museums
- Action 5: Track marketing plan success

Goal 2: Attain reaccreditation with the American Association of Museums

- Action 1: Secure or develop required documents, as necessary
- Action 2: Complete Self-Study
- Action 3: Host Visiting Committee for on-site reaccreditation evaluation
- Action 4: Museum reaccreditation secured

Goal 3: Complete and implement American Association of Museum's Museum Assessment Program III - Public Dimension Assessment

- Action 1: Prepare for MAP peer reviewers' site visit
- Action 2: Host peer reviewers during site visit
- Action 3: Implement peer reviewers' Assessment Report

Goal 4: Conduct year-long community-wide 75th birthday celebration for Museum in 2009

- Action 1: Secure support of key entities (ISU administration / departments, SBOE)
- Action 2: Convene Celebration Committee
- Action 3: Develop Celebration timeline and budget
- Action 4: Plan activities and secure sponsors
- Action 5: Hold year-long community-wide celebration of Museum's 75th birthday

Strategic Directive IV: Strengthen relationships with key constituents

Goal 1: Increase understanding of users of core Museum services, their needs, and their preferred receipt of services

- Action 1: Review surveys for information about who our audiences are and what we learned from the survey process

Action 2: Develop surveys for visitors and the community-at-large to test their needs

Action 3: Hold focus group to learn how IMNH can better serve its audiences

Action 4: Create a Museum Advisory Board to replace the old Museum Action Panels

Action 5: Create IMNH Community Advocates

Action 6: Track, analyze and use information gathered to shape core services

Goal 2: Strengthen relationship with ISU administration, faculty, students and the community-at-large

Action 1: Assess the relationship of IMNH with ISU administration, faculty and students, etc.

Action 2: Strengthen relationship with ISU administration

Action 3: Assess and strengthen relationship with ISU faculty

Action 4: Assess and strengthen relationship with ISU students

Action 5: Assess and strengthen relationships with major ISU entities (e.g. Obler Library, Center for Ecological Research and Education)

Action 6: Assess and strengthen relationship with likely community partners

Strategic Directive V: Ensure acquisition, retention, and professional development of necessary staff/human resources

Goal 1: Increase opportunities for professional development

Action 1: Assess professional development needs based on 2006 Strategic Plan

Action 2: Identify professional development opportunities

Action 3: Develop a plan for to provide increased professional development

Action 4: Implement plan for increased professional development

Action 5: Assess and revise plan for increased professional development

Goal 2: Increase number of human resources (work-study and graduate students, volunteers and/or paid staff)

Action 1: Identify our current human resource base and sources

Action 2: Identify specific projects that require additional assistance and advertise those positions

Action 3: Create and implement volunteer services program

Goal 3: Create job descriptions and performance plans for all Museum functions (especially curators) based on 2006 Strategic Plan

Action 1: Assess Strategic Plan for ways staff resources are affected

Action 2: Draft addenda to job descriptions / performance plans or create new job descriptions / performance plans to account for changes

Action 3: Addenda / new job descriptions or performance plans reviewed by ISU Human Resources (HR)

Action 4: Revise / redraft job descriptions / performance plans as indicated by HR

Action 5: Job descriptions / performance plans submitted to HR

Strategic Directive VI: Create and implement a shared Museum vision

Goal 1: “We’ve planned the work . . . Now, we work the plan together”

Action 1: Strengthen team work

Action 2: Perform long-range planning and assess sustainability

Action 3: Identify and prioritize long-term goals (5 to 10 year)

Goal 2: Define and codify relationship with the Idaho State Board of Education (SBOE)

Action 1: Investigate other state museum of natural history relationships with their governing entities

Action 2: Present a strategy for relationship to ISU parents

Action 3: Present strategy to SBOE Executive Director

Action 4: Present to SBOE for approval

Goal 3: Define, codify and grow relationship with IMNH Foundation/ISU Foundation

Goal 4: Increase opportunities for institutional development

Action 1: Assess institutional development needs based on revised 2006 Strategic Plan

Action 2: Identify institutional development opportunities

Action 3: Develop a plan to provide for increased institutional development

Action 4: Implement plan for increased institutional development

Action 5: Assess and revise plan for increased institutional development

Strategic Directive VII: Identify, develop and implement effective, efficient technology systems to support all Museum functions

Goal 1: Upgrade all Museum technology to ISU and/or Museum professional standards

Action 1: Assess technology currently in use

Action 2: Assess and prioritize technology needs

Action 3: Develop and implement plan for museum technology

Action 4: Assess, revise, and implement museum technology plan